



“The Impact of Community-based Capital Cash Transfers on the Schooling of Orphaned and Vulnerable Children in Kenya”

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The Impact of Community-based Capital Cash Transfers on orphan schooling in Kenya

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Abstract

We report on a community-based capital cash transfer initiative (CCCT) in Kenya that sought to mobilise and enable HIV-affected communities to respond to the needs of orphaned and vulnerable children. With bilateral funding, the Social Services Department in Kenya provided 80 communities across 10 Districts with advice and resources to set up social enterprises for the support of vulnerable children. A wide range of food and income generating activities were initiated by the communities, whose produce or profits resulted in improved school attendance and performance, particularly amongst girls. We conclude that CCCT is a viable strategy for improving orphan schooling in sub-Saharan Africa.

Key words: Education, OVC, Cash Transfers, HIV, AIDS, Kenya, Africa

Key findings

- Orphaned and vulnerable children are less likely to attend school regularly and perform less well academically compared to their non-orphaned peers
- Community Groups can design and implement social enterprise activities with the support of Community-based Capital Cash Transfers (CCCT).
- CCCT programmes can result in improved school attendance and academic performance.

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Background

The recently proposed Investment Framework for an effective HIV response highlights the importance of community mobilisation to appropriate interventions for improved impact and efficiency gains (Schwartländer et al., 2011; UNAIDS, 2011). There are however few examples in the peer-reviewed literature on how to effectively mobilise community members, enabling them to respond to the needs of those most vulnerable. In this report we describe an intervention that sought to sensitise community members to the needs of orphaned and

Community capacity building through Community-based Capital Cash Transfers*Steps*

1. Sensitisation of community members on orphan issues and children's rights.
2. Community elects a project development and management committee.
3. Committee receives trainings on project management, book-keeping, community participation and social enterprise.
4. Rapid appraisal of orphaned and vulnerable children in the local community, as well as generating a list of between 65-100 of the most needy children in the community.
5. Community writes up a social action plan that aims to overcome some of the obstacles that families face in providing orphan care and support.
6. After approval of the social action plan, community bank accounts were set up and provided with €4,000 to implement their Action Plan
7. Committee and community members received project specific training (e.g., animal disease management, poultry keeping)
8. On-going monitoring and support from the District Social Development Officers (DSDOs).

vulnerable children and build their capacity through training and community-based capital cash transfers (CCCT)(see Figure 1). As one of the primary aims of the programme was to improve the educational attainment of orphaned and vulnerable children, we assessed the impact of the intervention by examining school absenteeism and academic performance in vulnerable children living in communities where CCCT programmes were active.

Figure 1: Steps involved in the implementation of Community-based Capital Cash Transfers

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In response to the devastating impact of HIV on the lives of children in Kenya, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development in Kenya, with the support of the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) set up the Community Capacity Support Programme (CCSP) in 2003 (Skovdal, Mwasiaji, Webale, & Tomkins, 2011; Tomkins, Mwasiaji, Mbale, & Skovdal, 2008). The programme, implemented between 2004 and 2006, sought to increase the capacity of communities, enabling them to adequately respond to the needs of orphaned and vulnerable children. The programme mobilised a number of communities (often a cluster of small villages within the same geographical location) across 13 Districts of Kenya and encouraged them to develop community action plans for social enterprises that will enable the communities to collectively respond to the needs of orphaned and vulnerable children. Recognising the need to provide the communities with the training and resources required for them to implement their community action plans, a sum of €4,000 was provided (through bank transfers) to each participating community after producing a realistic and appropriate plan of action. Enthusiastic and innovative action plans were developed. Village and Project Development Committees had the responsibility for identifying and listing those children who were especially vulnerable as it was felt that the capital could not support all needy children in the catchment areas.

A total of 80 social enterprises were established across the 10 Districts participating in this study. As reported elsewhere (Skovdal, et al., 2011), the most common activity was goat rearing (n=14) (see Figure 2), followed by renting out and using oxen and plough for farming (n=13), farming implements (n=8) and bee keeping (n=7).



Figure 2: Goat rearing, the most popular activity

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Evaluation

Many development programmes are implemented without adequate monitoring and evaluation systems in place. There is effectively a need to explore different ways to evaluate programmes retrospectively. We report on an evaluation that seeks to explore the outcome of a programme in relation to children's school attendance and performance by drawing on existing administrative schools records, data which were gathered irrespective of the programme and this evaluation.

Administrative school records making note of attendance and academic achievement were reviewed from 708 children (272 CCSP-supported orphans, 177 non-CCSP supported orphans and 259 non-orphans) across 10 of the 13 Districts participating in the programme. Three Districts were left out due to the unavailability of key District staff in the planning process. Within the 10 districts there was an estimated population of 2,700 orphaned children. One community (from an average of three communities per District) was sampled to represent each district. Communities reported to have the highest number of orphaned children were included. In each selected community an updated list of all orphaned children was prepared by the local project management committee. An eligibility list of orphaned was drawn up. Criteria for exclusion included those who mid-way through the project dropped out of school to migrate or completed their education. As school drop-outs are likely to constitute some of the most vulnerable children on the list, this biases our findings and is a limitation of the study. A maximum of 30 CCSP supported orphaned children were systematically and randomly sampled from the eligibility list in each community. Using the list of the sampled CCSP supported orphaned children, trained field assistants went to the respective primary schools with coding sheets and, with the help of the school registers, randomly recorded the details of non-CCSP supported orphaned children and non-orphaned children. Children in each of the three groups were matched using sex and level in school. Four communities were not able to yield the necessary 30 CCSP supported orphans. The data collected was entered first into Excel spread sheets then exported into SPSS 10 for analysis. The basic analysis framework consisted of

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comparing the school attendance and academic performance between the three groups of children between 2004 and mid-2007. The evaluation was relatively inexpensive and done retrospectively with no baseline survey tailor-made for this evaluation.

Findings

School attendance

Whereas most of the children, orphaned or not, were enrolled at school, there were many occasions when children did not attend school. The figure of 12 days was chosen after extensive discussion with teachers and community leaders. As most school terms are 12 weeks long, this cut-off for absenteeism represents 20% of school days missed.

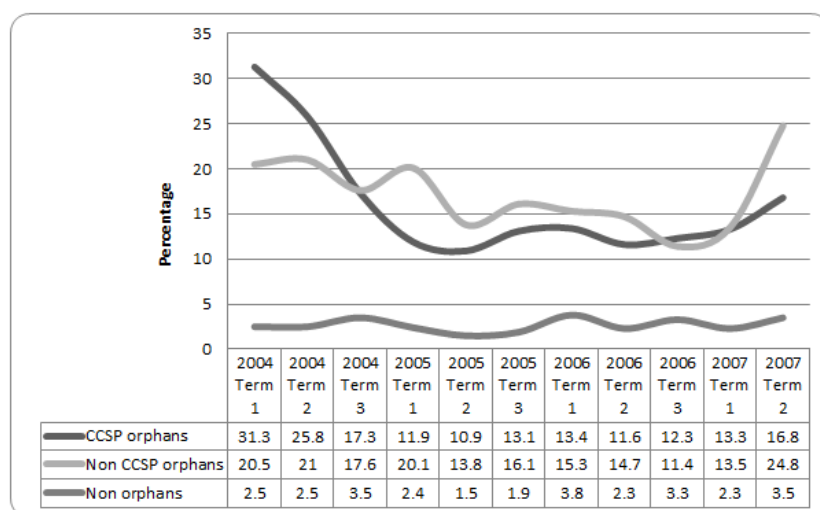


Figure 3: Proportion of children with high absenteeism (> 12 days/term)

Figure 3 shows that the absenteeism rates for non-orphans were low (<4%) and remained low during the course of the study. This contrasted with the very high rates of absenteeism in both groups of orphaned children at the beginning of the study. CCSP-orphans had higher rates of absenteeism than the non-CCSP orphans ($p < 0.02$). Figure 3 also shows that absenteeism among the CCSP-orphans fell from 31.3% to 11.9% within a year of starting the programme and then stayed at a similar level over the next two years, remaining considerably worse than the non-

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orphans. A simple difference-in-difference estimation comparing CCSP supported and non-supported orphans suggest that absenteeism dropped by 11% more in the period for CCSP-orphans (see Table 1)

Table 1: Simple difference-in-difference estimation of proportion of children with high absenteeism

	Absentee rate (Term 1, 2004)	Absentee rate (Term 1, 2007)	Difference between periods
CCSP supported orphans	31.3%	13.3%	-18%
Non CCSP supported orphans	20.5%	13.5%	-7%
Difference between groups	10.8%	-0.2%	-11%

One can only speculate what contributed to these changes, but it is likely CCSP-orphans received support early on in the programme, possibly an outcome of community sensitisation to the needs of orphaned children and the income or produce generated from the social enterprises. The rates did not fall to those experienced by the non-orphans, probably because the potential factors causing orphaned children to stay away from school were not eliminated altogether by the programme. There was also an improvement among non-CCSP orphans. Even though they were not the primary target for the CCCT, it is likely that a community-wide interest into the welfare of orphaned children, stimulated by the programme, may have benefitted orphaned children more widely.

When dissecting the above findings according to gender, the disenfranchised position of girls becomes clear. CCSP supported orphaned girls tended to be absent for more days at baseline than boys (9.2 days for girls versus 7.1 days for boys; $p=0.89$). As illustrated by Figure 4, girls witnessed the greatest improvement in school attendance with the average number of days absent per term falling from 9.2 days at the start of the project to 5 days at the end of the project. While absenteeism improved during the course of the programme, girls tended to be

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away from school more than boys throughout the programme. Girl's relatively higher level of absenteeism was also observed amongst non-orphans and non-CCSP supported orphaned children.

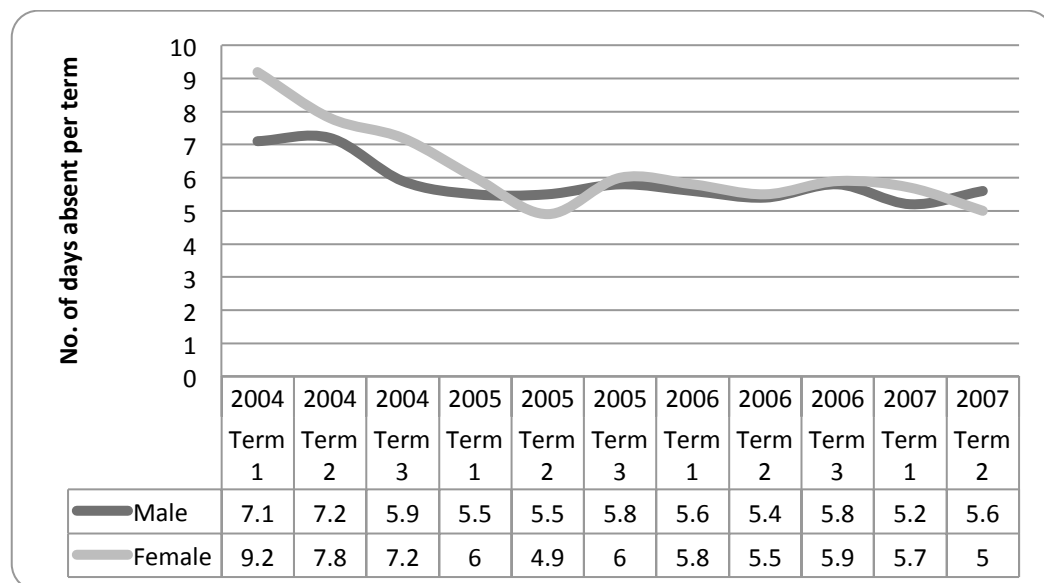


Figure 4: Absenteeism (no. of days absent/term) among CCSP supported orphaned children by gender

School performance

A level of 250 (out of a possible maximum of 400) for "poor academic scores" was chosen after extensive discussions with teachers and community leaders. 250 is the pass grade and it was felt that a figure of below 250 was not satisfactory from a child development perspective as it meant the child would be unable to proceed to secondary school. Whether a poor academic performance is due to problems with school education provision or due to the poor health and nutritional status of the children was not investigated in this evaluation.

Figure 5 shows the % of CCSP supported orphans with low scores was higher than non-CCSP supported orphans and the non-orphans at baseline ($p < 0.001$). The CCSP supported orphans however improved towards the levels in non-CCSP supported orphans in the second and

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subsequent years of the programme, whilst the proportion of non-orphans with marks above 250 deteriorated during the course of the study. The proportion with poor scores in the CCSP-supported orphan group was consistently above 50% in year one and mostly below 50% in subsequent years. A simple difference-in-difference estimation comparing CCSP supported and non-supported orphans suggest that the proportion of children with low scores dropped by 10.5% more in the period for CCSP supported orphans (see Table 2)

Table 2: Simple difference-in-difference estimation of proportion of children with low scores

	Low scores (Term 1, 2004)	Low scores (Term 1, 2007)	Difference between periods
CCSP supported orphans	55.2%	50.9%	-4.3%
Non CCSP supported orphans	42.4%	48.6%	6.2%
Difference between groups	12.8%	2.3%	-10.5%

It was not possible to discern why the CCSP supported orphans made such progress, whilst non-orphaned children deteriorated, but provision of basic needs plus greater motivation because of the attention that was being diverted to them might have been important.

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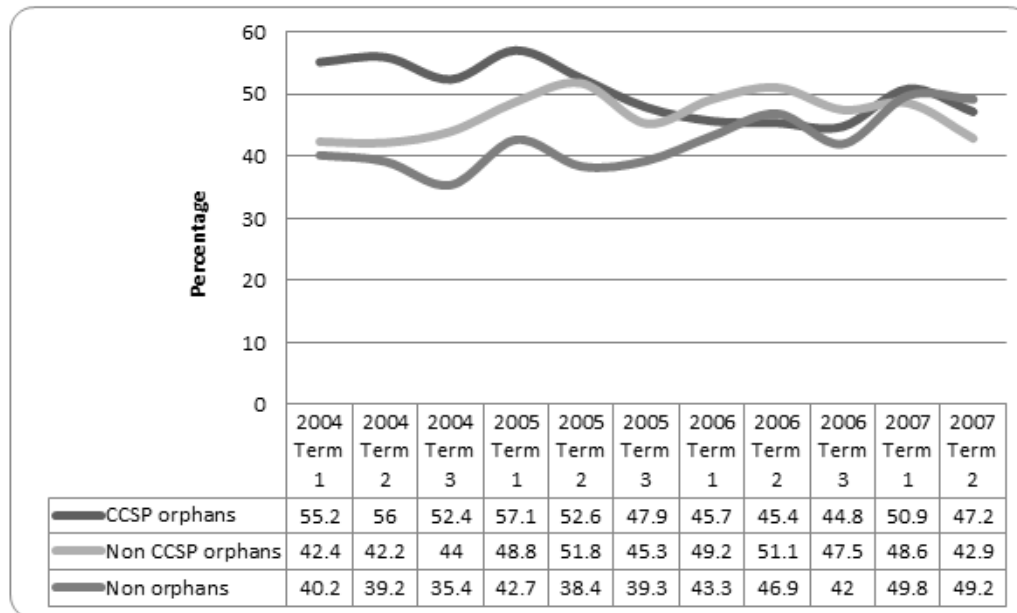


Figure 5: Proportion of children with low scores (< 250 marks)

When dissecting the mean scores according to gender, a pattern similar to that of absenteeism emerges amongst CCSP supported orphaned children (see Figure 6). Boys did better than girls at baseline (mean scores of 255 amongst boys versus 244 amongst girls; $p=0.256$) and in the first year of the programme but thereafter there was no difference – suggesting the programme had a greater impact on girls than boys.

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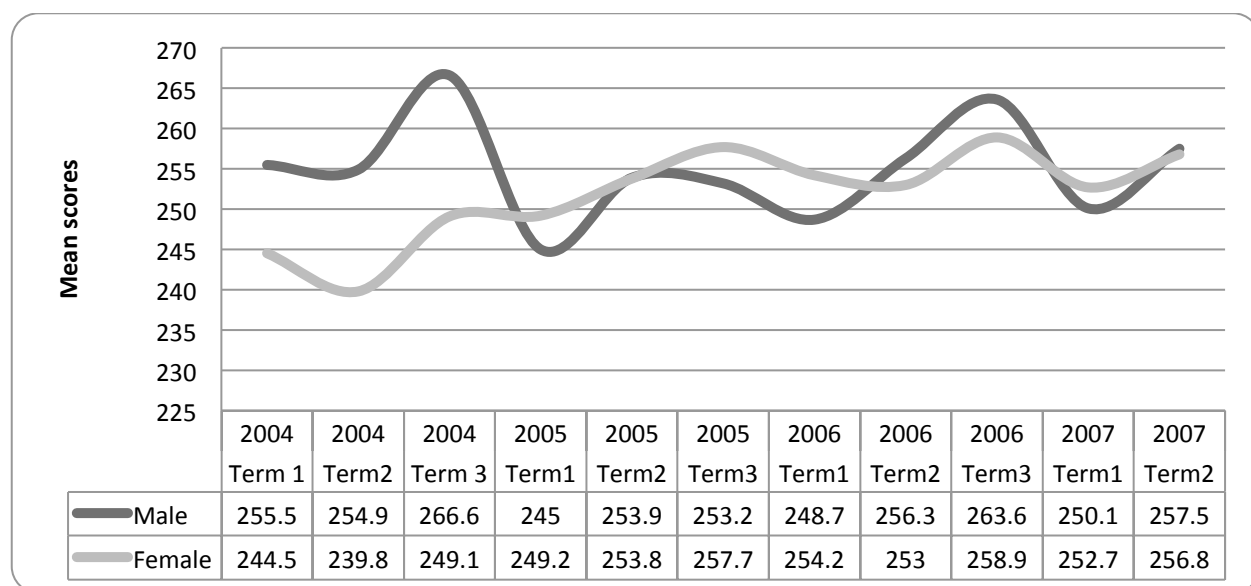


Figure 6: Mean scores for CCSP supported orphaned children by gender

This assertion is further supported by the observation that non CCSP supported orphaned girls tended to have higher scores in the first year of the programme but thereafter the scores were similar between boys and girls (see Figure 7). Figure 6 and 7 combined suggest that community members successfully identified the most vulnerable girls to benefit from the programme.

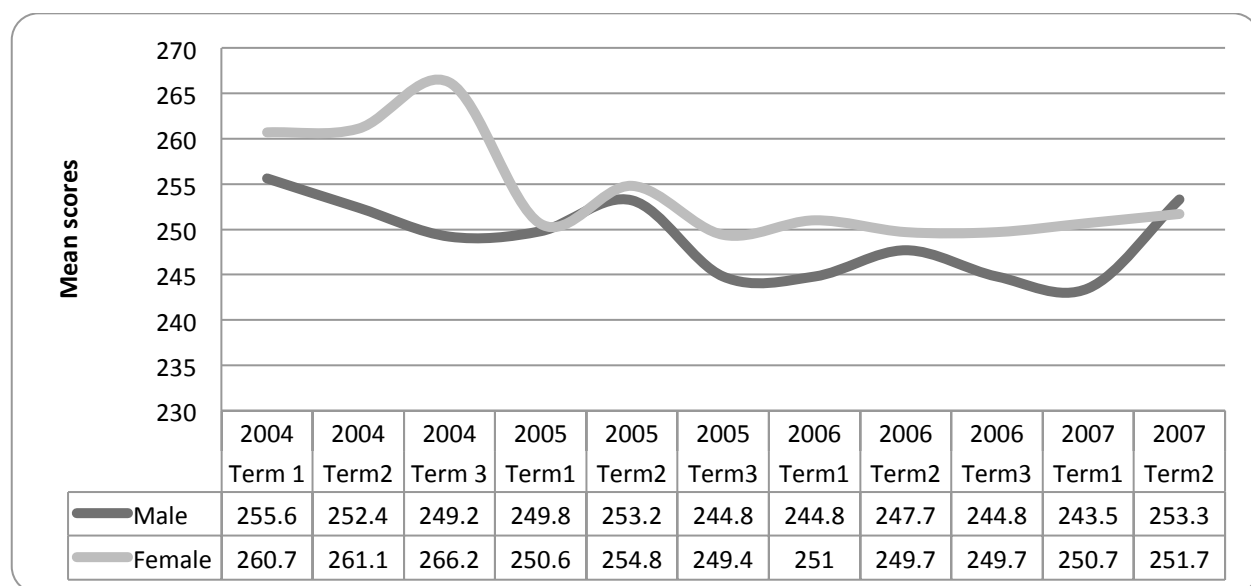


Figure 7: Mean scores for non-CCSP supported orphaned children by gender

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Lessons learned

This report highlights the potential of the Community Capacity Support Programme in sensitising community members to the needs of orphaned and vulnerable children and providing them with the much needed resources, exemplified through community-based capital cash transfers and the skills and knowledge they gained from the process of setting up a social enterprise in support of orphaned and vulnerable children.

During the three-year period the programme was active, school attendance and performance improved significantly for CCSP supported orphans and for other orphaned children in the community. While we are unsure why there was improvement in the non-targeted orphans, our conjecture is that the programme sparked an interest in the welfare of all orphaned and vulnerable children in the community, which in turn stimulated change in the support they received for going to school (Skovdal & Campbell, 2010; Skovdal, et al., 2011).

The data also highlights important gender differences, although these were statistically insignificant. Girls tended to be away more and to do worse academically than boys in the CCSP supported group. AS a result of the support given to the CCSP supported group there was improvement in the girls such that they achieved similar scores to the boys by the end of the programme. We argue that the extra attention given to supporting the needs of especially marginalised orphaned and vulnerable children was a key factor in improving the educational status of orphaned girls.

A few limitations of this study deserve to be mentioned. Although gathering the school attendance and academic performance records of children to assess the impact of an intervention can – as we have shown – be useful, this easy and relatively inexpensive evaluation method does miss out of some of the nuances and complexities that more rigorously planned academic research would examine. For example, we were unable to examine differences in impact according to the characteristics (e.g., age, household composition, socio-economic

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status) of the three groups and according to type of orphanhood (e.g., maternal, paternal or total orphans). Similarly, due to the small sample size, and the wide variety of activities implemented through CCCT, we were unable to establish if any type, or group of community activities contributed to a greater impact. We were also not in a position to consider counterfactuals.

Nonetheless, this study suggests that orphaned and vulnerable children in rural Kenya are disenfranchised with regards to their school attendance and performance compared to non-orphaned peers. This programme has taught us four valuable lessons. First, school attendance and performance are worse among orphaned and vulnerable children than among non-orphans. Second, that communities are fully capable of, and in a great position, to identify the most vulnerable children in the community and implement social enterprise activities aimed at supporting them. Third, implementing CCCT activities was followed by improvement in school attendance and performance, particularly amongst girls. Fourth, school attendance and academic performance are easily gathered and could be used more widely in monitoring the outcomes of interventions aimed at improving the social and economic welfare of vulnerable families and children.

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